

VZCZCXYZ0000
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNT #2083/01 3391305
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 051305Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8873
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3513
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9726
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4129
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0023
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0102
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0003
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3738
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2013
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0111
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0685
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1671
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0872
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2166
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0020
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 002083

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/05/2017
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: THIRD INMATE DIES IN ANDIJON PRISON

REF: TASHKENT 1999

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: On December 3, BBC News reported that a third inmate at a prison in Andijon had died, which follows reports that two other inmates had died at the same prison earlier in November (reftel). Surat Ikramov, the source of the BBC report, told poloff that the third inmate's family was ordered by authorities not to open the casket or speak with human rights activists. He also reported that the sister of one of the other two inmates had found evidence of torture on his body. Ikramov contended that many cases of prisoners being mistreated or killed go unreported, noting that approximately 25 prisoners disappeared from a prison in Navoi province following a disturbance there in August. In addition, the Associated Press reported on December 3 that the son of a prominent human rights activist stabbed himself in protest after enduring beatings at the hand of prison guards. Although the true number of inmates who die in Uzbek prisons is impossible to verify, we agree with Ikramov's contention that the true number is probably greater than what has been reported, giving us all the more reason to continue to press the Uzbeks on improving prison conditions and opening them up to outside monitors. End summary.

BODY OF THIRD INMATE DELIVERED TO FAMILY IN TASHKENT

12. (U) On December 3, BBC News reported on its website that a third prisoner died at the same prison in Andijon as had two other inmates in November (reftel). Local human rights defender Surat Ikramov, the source of the BBC article, reported on his website that the body of the prisoner was returned to his family in Tashkent, who were reportedly ordered by authorities not to open the casket or to speak with human rights activists or journalists.

13. (C) Ikramov told poloff on December 5 that he had not

been able to verify yet the identity of the third prisoner or the cause of death as the family is too scared to talk with him. His source is the sister of Takhir Nurmammedov, one of the two other inmates who died earlier in November and who knows the family of the third inmate. Ikramov was not sure when the third inmate died, but believed that it occurred around November 29. He noted that all three inmates were housed together at Andijon prison T-1 and were convicted of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) membership.

EVIDENCE OF TORTURE ALLEGED IN CASE OF TAKHIR NURMUAMEDOV

¶4. (C) Ikramov met recently with the sister of Nurmammedov, who reported evidence of torture on her brother's body, including that his buttocks were burned and parts had been cut off and that the left side of his head was dented. He agreed to invite poloff to a follow-up meeting with her soon.

¶5. (C) Ikramov also tried but failed to meet with the brother of Fitrat Salohuddinov, the other inmate who allegedly died of torture earlier in November. He recently tried to visit the brother's house, but was blocked from entering by approximately 20 Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) officers who were standing around the house. Despite being informed of Ikramov's arrival, the brother refused to come out to meet him, and Ikramov suspected that the MVD officers prevented him from doing so.

OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE OFFER CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS OF DEATHS

¶6. (C) As reported in reftel, Parliamentary Ombudsman for Human Rights Chief of Staff Maruf Usmanov told embassy local political specialist on November 20 that Nurmammedov had succumbed to tuberculosis. During a meeting with poloff on November 27, Usmanov said that either Nurmammedov or Salohuddinov had died of a heart attack, and that the other inmate had died of kidney disease (he was unsure of which prisoner died of what), and offered no explanation for the apparent contradiction with his earlier report (Comment: We believe that the Ombudsman's office might have been informed that the two inmates were generically ill, and that Usmanov might have been speculating on both occasions about the true nature of their alleged illnesses. End comment.)

"JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG"?

¶7. (C) Ikramov told poloff on December 5 that the three recent deaths in custody were "just the tip of the iceberg" and suspected many other cases that went unreported. He pointed out that the families of the three inmates all lived in Tashkent, where the majority of the country's journalists and human rights activists reside, while the families of many other prisoners reside in rural areas without regular access to phones or the internet.

¶8. (C) Ikramov also reported that approximately 25 inmates convicted of religious extremism disappeared after a disturbance in August at prison colony 64/48 in Navoi province. According to Ikramov, the disturbance began after prisoners convicted of religious extremism began a hunger strike to protest conditions. The disturbance was eventually crushed by authorities. After the incident, Ikramov believes that the inmates were transferred to other prisons and are now being held in solitary confinement. He said that the families of the prisoners do not know the prisoners' current locations, and he was unsure if all of the prisoners were still alive.

¶9. (C) In its alternative report presented in Geneva in November to the United Nations Committee Against Torture, the Ezgulik human rights organization reported on two other cases of inmates who allegedly died in prison this year. According to the report, on April 5, Bakhtiyor Hasanov, a former

military prosecutor of the Surkhandarya Province prosecutor's office who was convicted of selling narcotics, allegedly died at prison colony 64/21 after being tortured by another inmate on orders from the colony's deputy chief, Jashid Rusulov. In August, authorities delivered the body of Ortikjon Muhammedov, who was earlier convicted of HT membership, to his family in Tashkent and ordered that it be buried immediately. Muhammedov was an inmate at prison colony 64/48 in Navoi province and was reportedly killed during the disturbance there. According to those who had seen his body, it was allegedly covered in bruises and wounds. Ezgulik chief Vasila Inoyatova told poloff on December 4 that the information on the two cases had been verified through discussions with relatives.

SON OF PROMINENT HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS STABS SELF IN PRISON
AFTER BEATING BY GUARDS

¶10. (C) On December 3, the Associated Press and the independent Uznews.net website reported that Ikhtiyor Hamroev, who was sentenced in August 2006 to 3 years imprisonment on politically-motivated charges of hooliganism and is the son of prominent human rights activist Bakhtiyor Hamroev, allegedly stabbed himself on November 30 after being beaten for several days by prison guards. Although the AP article reported that Ikhtiyor was hospitalized, Bakhtiyor is quoted in the Uznews.net article as saying that Ikhtiyor was denied medical treatment and was subsequently thrown into solitary confinement. On December 4, Ezgulik chief Vasila Inoyatova told poloff that she had spoken with Bakhtiyor, who confirmed to her the details of the Uznews.net article. She also said that she planned to try to visit Ikhtiyor in prison with Bakhtiyor on December 6. In January, Ikhtiyor was earlier hospitalized with a stomach ulcer after being beaten in the midsection by prison guards.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) As reported in reftel, Ikramov has good connections with the families of imprisoned HT members and we consider his information to be generally reliable. We agree with him that the number of prisoners who die in custody is most likely higher than the three reported here, and that many cases probably go unreported, although the exact number is impossible to estimate. We will continue to press the Uzbeks on improving prison conditions and opening prisons to outside observers, especially monitors from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

HANSON